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A VISION OF THE PAST.

Strange dreams of what I used to be
And what I dreamed I would be, swim
Before my vision, faint and dim
As misty distances we see
In pictured scenes of fairy lands;
And ever on, with empty hands,
And eyes that ever lie to me,
And smiles that no one understands,
I grope adown my destiny.

Some say I waver when I walk
Along the crowded thoroughfares,
And some leer in my eyes, and talk
Of dullness, when I see in theirs—
Like fishes' eyes, alive or dead—
But surfaces of vacancy—
Blank disks that never seem to see,
But glint and glow and glare instead.

The ragged shawl I wear is wet
With driving, dripping rains, and yet
It seems a royal raiment, where,
Through twisted torrents of my hair,
I see rare gems that gleam and shine
Like jewels in a stream of wine;
The gaping shoes that clothe my feet
Are golden sandals, and the shrine
Where courtiers grovel and repeat
Vain prayers, and where in joy thereat,
A fair prince doffs his plumed hat,
And kneels, and names me all things sweet.

Sometimes the sun shines, and the lull
Of winter noon is like a tune
The stars might twinkle to the moon
If night were white and beautiful—
For when the clangor of the town,
And strife of traffic softens down,
The wakeful hunger that I nurse,
In listening, forgets to curse,
Until—ah, joy! with drooping head
I drowse, and dream that I am dead
And buried safe beyond their eyes
Who either pity or despise.

—James Whitcomb Riley.

THE WATER DOCTOR.

"My well has went dry this summer—plumb gave out last month, an the river three miles away. Hed to rig up a barrel on runners an haul all the water for the wimmen folks."

The speaker was a new settler in one of the coast range valleys of southern California, far from the great irrigation ditches and prosperous orange growing colonies. He was talking to a neighbor whose land claim was just over the ridge in a more fertile district. Gloriana, as the new settlement was named, had only two things to recommend it—the climate was fairly good and the land very cheap.

Otherwise it was a sorry place. The soil was shallow and very poor, the hills were low, barren and without streams, so that any irrigation system was impossible. Nevertheless the Morisons had given up their little home in northern Iowa and moved to California, actuated by the same motive that often led millionaires—the daughter could not stand the winters. They and dozens of other families were scattered through the hills trying to make a living by chopping wood, keeping bees and doing a little farming. And now the well had gone dry, adding another burden to those already so severe.

"All the wells hereabouts give out dry seasons," was the answer that Morison received. "There doesn't seem to be any water in the hills this side of the range."

"I don't see what to do, then. Bees was beginnin to pay, an I thort of plantin an orchard down on the beach. There's about an acre of good land down that way. The chickins is doin pretty well, too, but it do take a dreadful lot of water when you hev to haul it three miles."

"Well, Morison, mebbe Crane, the half cracked water doctor down at Sespe, might fix it up. He claims that he can find water; in fact, he does more than than that. He's queer and crazy, but for 20 years people haven't been goin to his cabin after dark, there's so many electric wires and things that might explode underfoot and overhead."

"I don't care," said Morison, "I'll go see him right away."

Dr. Orlando Crane was very tall and shaggy, broad shouldered, massive, with an immense hooked nose and piercing eyes. He lived alone in a cabin at the head of a ravine, and he had arranged bell and wires along the narrow path so that he had ample warning of the approach of a visitor.

He received Morison with grave politeness, and listened to his story.

"That's all right," he said, "you new comers in that dry country need help. Certainly you do. But it isn't a little water more or less in your wells that you want; it's a river—a subterranean river—that I might be able to find. If one of my inventions was only a trifle nearer completed, I would make the river for you settlers."

"I hope so, doctor," said Morison, humbly.

"Yes, I will, and pretty soon too. I'll tell you all about it some of these days. It's only electric action makes water, and the earth is a great electric battery. There's a way to make gold, or diamonds or mineral water by electric action. I know all about it."

Morison had driven to Sespe, so Dr. Crane, "the world famous water developer," as his circulars stated, rode back to Gloriana that afternoon, carrying with him a long brass tube filled with clustered and tensely strung wires. He also had a simple galvanic battery to which the wires could be attached.

A number of the settlers of the mountain region assembled the next day to witness the operations of the necromancer, who fully appreciated his importance and surrounded his mystic art with every accompaniment of surprise. He showed the wondering company that as he approached a vessel of water the wires grew tenser and fairly sang like violin strings.

"I must say it's providential we heard of you," said Mrs. Morison, with heartfelt earnestness and entire conviction.

The water doctor finally began active operations at the lower corner of the Morison land claim and walked back and forth across it in various directions. At last he paused high up on the hillside and told his followers to observe the behavior of his instrument. There certainly was an electrical disturbance of a very violent sort, he said, and they were standing over an underground reservoir. He marked the exact spot, and the men began digging with violent energy, while the women and children sat on the slope and awaited results.

The doctor encouraged them by stories of his previous exploits. "There's no chance of failure with this electrical machine of mine. I call it the 'infallible water indicator.' The old forked stick of hazel will sometimes turn over water, but my way is a heap better. I know exactly how far you have got to dig and exactly how much water you'll find. I always know. Then, too, this machine tells me when I am over any mineral, such as gold and silver, and how far off it is; also how large the quantity. I should have been a rich man long ago if I wasn't so honest. I know of one man down at Sespe who has a mine on his land worth $1,000,000. I offered to show it to him for half, but he offered me only 10 per cent, and of course I let him simmer awhile. But I came out to give you newcomers a lift without any charge, except nominal, because you're a different kind."

After awhile the strain of excitement grew too great for speech. The men were far down in the pit they were sinking, and every few minutes they were relieved by others. Ten feet, 20 feet, 30 feet—a rude windlass had long been brought into use. Suddenly a hoarse cry rose from the well: "Water! Water!" An ample spring in a channel of rock had been uncovered in such wise that it was certain that a cut could be made so as to let it flow to the very door of the Morisons.

The old doctor's eyes fairly blazed with excitement. Any physician trained in obscure mental disorders would have recognized cerebral trouble in his look and manner. He burst forth into a shout of victory.

"Edison ought to be here!" he cried. "The man is all wrong on electricity. So are the rest of them. They have no system. I can make power direct from raw material. I can take the electricity straight out of the coal without burning it. I can set a machine at making water whenever a man wants it. This is the way nature does in the heart of the earth. Rivers are being created by electrical action in caverns where not a drop of rainwater can ever sink. This spring we have found has nothing to do with the surface and is not fed by rains. It is created by electrical action between two kinds of rock, and it will flow alike at all seasons."

The settlers listened in dumb amazement, but with full faith in every word. They named it the "Crane spring" and praised him with hearty enthusiasm. They feasted him on the best they had, escorted him back to Sespe and went way firm champions of the water doctor.

Dr. Crane was a man of more than ordinary ability, but his education had been slight and his powers were entirely unbalanced. Whether he really had the sensitive organization of the true seer, whether he was deceived or deceiver, sane or not wholly himself, no human being will ever know. But the records of whole districts, and even counties, remain to attest to the wonderful discoveries of hidden water that he managed to make at intervals, in many places, far apart. He made some egregious failures also, and in time the community was divided into two nearly equal bodies respectively arguing for and against his honesty. Meanwhile he still dwelt in his lonely cabin, brooding over a larger enterprise.

What was the use, he argued, of finding a spring now and then, or telling some poor settler where to find his well? Why not develop at one stroke a river—a large river in the Mohave desert—and so reclaim hundreds of thousands of acres of rich land? By dint of earnest representation of the fortunes to be obtained he succeeded in enlisting the help of a number of poor settlers in the vicinity of Sespe, Gloriana and other places. They agreed to go with him to the Mohave desert, dig a great pit in the spot chosen by the doctor and there develop the hidden river. Then, filing claims on the adjacent lands, they would lay out a town and establish a colony.

Thus it happened that a few weeks later The Weekly Venturan published an article that startled the people of three counties. It was headed in full-face screamers:

ORLANDO THE PROPHET.
HE SUCCUMBS TO OUR INTERVIEWER.
ARE WE ON THE VERGE OF A VAST INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION?
THE SAGE OF SESPE SAYS WE ARE.

These sentences, printed in the largest available type, loomed over a 3-column article that was in its way a masterpiece. Whoever wrote it had a fresh, vivid genius for expressing the situation. Crane's personal appearance, the very tones of his voice, his mingling of charlatan and fanatic, his whole nature and history, stood out as under a calcium light.

"Dr. Crane," said the reporter, "consented at last to disclose the scientific principles on which he worked, yielding to the argument that no one but himself could apply them."

"The ebb and flow of electricity makes and unmakes from the simple elements all forms of the animal, vegetable and mineral world. My discovery that the mineral that we call water is formed in immense quantities in the earth by electrical currents was followed by the greater discovery that all minerals are made in the same way. By modifying my apparatus for ascertaining the presence of water, I was able to discover the exact distance of deposits of minerals, also their nature and quantity. Proceeding a step farther, I became able to find certain places in caves and narrow canyons, where the natural flow of the electric current caused the slow deposit of various minerals. There are mines in the Sierras where gold is regularly and consistently formed in the lower levels.

"After the hidden river of the Mohave is revealed, I shall find mountains of the precious minerals. The next thing will be to make trees grow to full size in a day or an hour. That will take larger machinery, but it can be done. The full control of animal life will take still longer."

"But what is the underlying principle, doctor?" asked the reporter.

"Haven't I made it as plain as a primer? Don't I say it is electricity, and nothing else? If I can handle it, I can get away with all the rest of them."

"You certainly will. But how do you handle it?"

"To tell you the truth, it is a personal gift. I spin fine wires of steel and stretch them with other metals into an instrument that I call my 'diviner.' Then I tune it with whatever I want—water or iron or gold or any other metal—and fix it permanently on that keynote. After that wherever I take it it responds to that and that only. This is the way I make my instruments, and as I don't really suppose any one else can do it I have never applied for a patent. Of course if I said much about these matters, people would think I was crazy; so I expect to find the river first, then I can do more."

"Tell me about the river."

"I heard it a few weeks ago on the Mohave desert. It is several hundred feet wide and 80 feet deep, flowing far under ground, except at one place, where it can be reached easily. Within a year after its discovery thousands of farms will be taken up, and the desert will become one of the gardens of the world."

The Venturan explained at much length the inventor's theories of colonization and ended by advising those who had leisure and a little money to spare to "take a trip to the Mohave to watch the modern Moses perform his great transformation act."

November saw 100 pioneers gathered at the mouth of a rocky ravine at the end of a chain of rocky mountains that thrust themselves far into the desert. Their horses were staked out in the midst of cactus and yuccas; wagons full of hay, water, provisions—hauled 25 miles from the nearest oasis—were scattered about the camp. Dr. Crane had chosen the place and marked the exact spot where he said the river was hardly 50 feet underground.

The men dug through several feet of hard sand, then reached a tough, red clay. They toiled in a great pit that steadily descended until one nightfall the doctor announced that on the morrow the river would be reached. He marked the course of the coming river across the barren desert and far out on the plain; the wagons were moved to a place of safety, and every thought was given up to rejoicing.

At midnight the wind changed, the temperature fell sharply; an old prospector who had spent half his life in the Arizona deserts woke and went from man to man rousing them to bring in the animals and seek shelter among the higher rocks away from the mouth of the ravine. "There is a storm coming!" he cried. "I have seen storms in such places before now." By dint of much energy he was at last able to move the party out of the direct sweep of the canyon.

Presently the storm arose, terrible as the desert itself, heralded by a mighty wind, darkened by wild clouds and blinding sheets of rain. Just at break of day, when the storm was at its height, while the desert for miles was under water, while the railroad track was being swept away, and the hills were being furrowed by thousands of new channels, there came a louder noise from the deserted pit in the ravine. The men, clinging to shelters among the great bowlders on the hill, saw a high, white wall of water moving like a flash across the flat, as if new risen from the chasm they had cut with their shovels.

"It is the river bursting out!" cried Dr. Crane, leaping forward to meet it and stumbling into the foaming current.

"It's a cloudburst, boys, and the old doctor's gone forever!" shouted the prospector as he rushed vainly from his shelter.

By an hour after sunrise the water had spread far over the plain and disappeared from sight; the sky was clear; the storm was ended. A mile distant upon the drenched sand the body of the water doctor was found and laid to rest on the hillside. Rudely carved upon a granite bowlder, the epitaph still remains to arouse the curiosity of an occasional hunter or prospector: "Orlando Crane, Water Doctor. Drowned In the Desert." Date and age follow, and that is all.

The followers of the dead man continued to sink the pit until it was far below the assigned depth. Some of them gave up then; others continued to toil on in dogged despair; a few declared roundly that they might bore to the middle of the earth before they found water. One after the other the followers of the late Orlando Crane collected their horses from the plain, gathered up their belongings and abandoned the water claim in the Mohave. They drifted back to the fertile valleys of the coast, and little by little the memory of the episode passed out of the thoughts of men, until even in Gloriana the waters that once gushed from beneath the magician's rod have lost their earlier name and are now the "Morison springs."—Charles Howard Shinn in Argonaut.

Quail Is Cheap This Season.

One of the most astonishing things just now is the cheapness of quail in all the restaurants around the city. I believe the birds are remarkably plenty this year, for the market is certainly drugged with them.

It is amusing to see men who have all their lives looked upon quail as rather an expensive luxury pick up a bill of fare from a restaurant table and read, "Roast quail, thirty-five cents." They can scarcely believe their eyes. The majority of them "just know for a certainty" that the dish is not what it pretends to be. It can't be possible they tell you. The birds must be robins or something like that. All the same they eat them and enjoy the meal, for the birds are quail, and good ones too.—New York Herald.

Why He Failed.

A queer story is told of a Clermont county merchant a few weeks ago. While in this city he was attracted by the watches displayed in a pawnshop window and stepped inside to examine them. Two or three persons from his village happened to pass and saw him. They went home and gossiped about the matter. A report was spread that he was hard up and had been seen pawning his watch in Cincinnati. The report injured his business and his creditors also began to press him. In a short time he was compelled to make an assignment.—Cincinnati Times-Star.

NOTICE.

I HAVE APPOINTED T. J. OSBORNE AS my Agent, to act during my absence, and to him all debts, etc., due me are to be paid.
A. MADDOX.
Dated Pioche, Nevada, Oct. 19, 1892.